181 thoroughbreds. No race prizes lineage higher, yet they are the most
554 democratic people in the world and the most individualistic. Among
them there is real equality. To certain families, by virtue of their descent,
177 they accord certain privileges, but as a courtesy, not as a right, and Badu
577 sheikhs command respect only as long as they merit it. The traditional
Arab way of life, fast vanishing to-day in contact with the West, owed
much to Badu concepts, for the villagers and townsmen of Arabia, who
form by far the greater part of her population, live close to the desert and
were profoundly affected by it until motor-cars and aeroplanes removed
for ever the need for camel journeys. Most of them are, indeed, of Badu
origin, for the desert tides have always stranded the weak and broken
upon the fringes of the Sown. Everywhere the Arabs have, at all times,
judged honour and chivalry and hospitality by the standards of the tribes-
men. Their love of liberty, their freedom from prejudice of class and
caste, and their enthusiasm for poetry have come to them from the desert.

159 It is impossible to assess the character of the Badu, for among no other
577 race have so many contradictory qualities been fused together. I myself
81 have witnessed their courage and self-reliance, their endurance and pride
of race, and I remember their patience, generosity, and unselfishness. But
often I have been exasperated by their avarice and wearied by their endless
[735] importunities. No Badu thinks it shame to beg, and usually he will look
disparagingly at the gift which he has received and grumble, "Is this all
[737] that you are going to give me?" Grasping and avaricious, they will talk
unceasingly of money and argue heatedly for days about a dollar, then
they will slaughter a camel worth 150 dollars to feed a stranger. Loyal to
each other, they are yet without regard for human life and will knife an
unarmed herdsboy with a jest. Cheerful and easily amused, they are
generally good-tempered, though passionate when roused and quick to
resent an injury.

166 I have often wondered as I rode across the desert what the future, and
even the immediate future, holds for my companions and their kinsmen.
The discovery of oil on the Persian Gulf is going to affect them pro-
foundly and make it impossible for them to continue in their old ways,
even if they would. I think myself that the oilfields will empty the desert.
This movement of tribes from the Yaman and the Hadhramaut towards
the north and the north-east is a movement which has been going on for
thousands of years. It probably started even before the great migration of
the Qahtan tribes, when, overwhelmed by calamity in their homes round
Marib, some of them pushed across the deserts and occupied Oman. In
recent years tribes such as the Awamir, Ruashid, and Manahil have left
their homelands in the steppes to the north-east of the Hadhramaut and
moved out into the sands to escape from the incursions of more powerful
166 tribes pressing on them from the west. Having accustomed themselves to
177 life in the sands, they have penetrated ever further and further into the
Empty Quarter. In the past twenty or thirty years as conditions have
become more settled in the north, due to the extension of Ibn Saud's
influence over the powerful Murra tribe, they have grazed their herds
round the Liwa oasis and in the sands near the Trucial Coast. Now the
money to be earned on the oilfields along the Gulf is drawing the Badu